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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major dailies November 30 focused on Minister of Justice Shih Mau-lin's opinion at an internal meeting of the Executive Yuan that special allowances for high-ranking officials are supplemental compensation, and officials therefore do not need to return the balance. On the inside pages, the focus was on reactions to Minister Shih's opinion, with Hsu Jan-yau, Minister of the Directorate-General for Budget, Accounting and Statistics of the Executive Yuan, saying that the practice of part of the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs is the same as special allowances for other high-ranking officials. Even though there are opinions favorable to President Chen Shui-bian, a news analysis in the "China Times" said that President Chen and the First Lady are not going to walk away from their alleged involvement in the scandal of the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs, since bogus receipts had been used to claim reimbursement, and the First Lady has obvious intentions to engage in corruption.

In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence "Liberty Times", Taiwan's largest circulation daily, noted in its editorial that pan-Blue legislators have continued blocking bills vital to the island; nominations for Control Yuan members and prosecutor-general; and the U.S. arms deal, yet they have included bills on the Legislative Yuan's agenda regarding cross-strait direct links that allegedly would jeopardize the island. End summary.

A) "[Are Pan-Blue Legislators] Taiwan's Congressmen or China's Agents"

The pro-independence, Taiwan's largest circulation daily "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (11/30):

"... on Tuesday [November 28], KMT and PFP legislators again blocked nominations for Control Yuan members and the prosecutor-general, and for the 66th time blocked the passage of the U.S. arms procurement bill in the Procedural Committee; however, they included controversial bills concerning direct transportation from the Sung Shan Airport [in Taipei] to Hong Kong and Macao, and the clause of 'direct transportation' under the Statute Governing Cross-Strait Relations in Friday's plenary session. ...

"... [So] on the one hand, pan-Blue legislators have blocked the nominations for Control Yuan members and prosecutor-general, and on the other hand, they are bound and determined to include bills related to the 'three links' on the agenda. This leads one to question strongly whether these legislators are Taiwan's congressmen or China's agents on the island. ..."

YOUNG